

Week Ending Friday, June 3, 2005

The President's Radio Address

May 28, 2005

Good morning. This Memorial Day weekend, Americans pay tribute to those who have given their lives in the service of our Nation. As we honor the members of our Armed Forces who have died for our freedom, we also honor those who are defending our liberties today.

On Friday, I met with some of the courageous men and women who will soon take their place in the defense of our freedom, the graduating class of the United States Naval Academy. These new officers will soon be serving on ships, flying combat missions, and leading our troops into battle against dangerous enemies. They are prepared for the challenges ahead, morally, mentally, and physically. The American people can be confident that their freedom is in good hands.

Our citizens live in freedom because patriots are willing to serve and sacrifice for our liberty. And on Monday, I will lay a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery in honor of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, a victory for freedom in which more than 400,000 Americans gave their lives. Today, a new generation of Americans is making its own sacrifice on behalf of peace and freedom, and some have given their lives.

In their hometowns, these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are more than names on a roll of honor. They were friends and neighbors, teachers and coaches, classmates and colleagues. Each was the most important person in someone's life. Each had hopes for the future, and each left a place that can never be filled. We mourn their loss, and we honor their sacrifice. We pray for their families. And we take heart in knowing that these men and women believed deeply in what they were fighting for.

Christopher Swisher was a staff sergeant from Lincoln, Nebraska, who joined the Army a year after graduating from high school. He was killed in an ambush while on patrol in Baghdad. Sergeant Swisher told his loved ones, "If anything happens to me, I'm doing what I want to be doing—I'm protecting my family and my home."

Rafael Peralta also understood that America faces dangerous enemies, and he knew the sacrifices required to defeat them. An immigrant from Mexico, he enlisted in the Marine Corps the day after he got his green card. Just before the battle of Fallujah, he wrote his 14-year-old brother, "We are going to defeat the insurgents. Be proud of me. I'm going to make history and do something that I always wanted to do." A few days later, Sergeant Peralta gave his life to save his fellow marines.

This Memorial Day, we remember Sergeant Peralta, Sergeant Swisher, and all who have given their lives for our Nation. And we honor them as we continue to wage the war on terror and spread freedom across the world. The people of Iraq and Afghanistan are determined to secure their freedom, and we will help them. We're training Iraqi and Afghan forces so they can take the fight to the enemy and defend their own countries, and then our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

Throughout our history, America has fought not to conquer but to liberate. We go to war reluctantly, because we understand the high cost of war. Those who have given their lives to defend America have the respect and gratitude of our entire Nation.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:45 a.m. on May 27 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the

Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia

May 30, 2005

Thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, thank you. Secretary Nicholson, General Myers, Members of Congress, members of the United States military, veterans, honored guests, fellow Americans, especially those loved ones of the fallen: Every year on this day, we pause to remember Americans fallen by placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. I'm honored to do that this morning on behalf of the American people. The names of the men buried there are known only to God, but their courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten by our Nation.

The soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines we remember today answered the call of service in their Nation's hour of need. They stood to fight for America's highest ideals. And when the sun came up this morning, the flag flew at halfstaff in solemn gratitude and in deep respect.

At our National Cemetery, we receive the fallen in sorrow, and we take them to an honored place to rest. Looking across this field, we see the scale of heroism and sacrifice. All who are buried here understood their duty. All stood to protect America. And all carried with them memories of a family that they hoped to keep safe by their sacrifice.

At a distance, their headstones look alike. Yet every son or daughter, mom or dad who visits will always look first at one. General Eisenhower put it well in 1944, when he wrote his wife, Mamie, about "the homes that must sacrifice their best." The families who come here have sacrificed someone precious and irreplaceable in their lives, and our Nation will always honor them.

At our National Cemetery, we're reminded why America has always been a reluctant warrior. This year we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, a victory for which more than 400,000 Americans gave their lives. Their courage crossed two oceans, and it conquered tyrants. Some of you here today fought in that war as young men, and

we make this pledge to you: America will always honor the character and the achievements of your brave generation.

Today we also remember the Americans who are still missing. We honor them, and our Nation is determined to account for all of them.

Another generation is fighting a new war against an enemy that threatens the peace and stability of the world. Across the globe, our military is standing directly between our people and the worst dangers in the world, and Americans are grateful to have such brave defenders. The war on terror has brought great costs. For those who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq, today is a day of last letters and fresh tears. Because of the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, two terror regimes are gone forever, freedom is on the march, and America is more secure.

At our National Cemetery, we take comfort from knowing that the men and women who are serving freedom's cause understand their purpose and its price. Marine Captain Ryan Beaupre of St. Anne, Illinois, was killed in the first hours of the war. He wrote his mom and dad a letter that was to be opened only in the event he didn't come home. He wrote, "Realize that I died doing something that I truly love for a purpose greater than myself."

Army Sergeant Michael Evans of Marrero, Louisiana, felt the same way. He was killed on January 28th while on patrol in western Baghdad. In his own farewell letter to his family, the 22-year-old reminded those he left behind to stay strong. He said, "My death will mean nothing if you stop now. I know it will be hard, but I gave my life so you could live. Not just live but live free."

For some of our young heroes, courage and service was a family tradition. Lance Corporal Darrell Schumann of Hampton, Virginia, was a machine gunner for the Marines, but his parents were Air Force. He liked to say, "Air Force by birth, Marine by choice, and American by the grace of God." Corporal Schumann was among the first to enter the battle against insurgents in Fallujah, and he was proud of what he—what we are achieving. He later died in a helicopter crash. In his last letter from Iraq, he